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THE HINDU

Kerala ill-equipped to store pesticide-free winter vegetables

| WASTED EFFORT | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Sl/No | Crop | Area In (Ha) | Date of Planting | Expected Date of Harvest | Yield Expected |
| 1 | Potato | 990 | March last to April 2015 | July to August 2015 | 25600 Tonne |
| 2 | Carrot | 755 | March last to April 2015 | July to August 2015 | 13925 Tonne |
| 3 | Cabbage | 512 | March last to April 2015 | July to August 2015 | 103500 Tonne |
| 4 | Beans | 385 | March last to April 2015 | July to August 2015 | 4240 Tonne |
| 5 | Garlic | 285 | March last to April 2015 | July to August 2015 | 2280 Tonne |
| Total | | 2927 | | | 149545 Tonne |

While the State is concerned over the high pesticide residue in vegetables arriving from other States, a major portion of the vegetables grown in Vattavada and Kanthallur, known for least pesticide use, is going directly to the Tamil Nadu markets.

The cool season vegetables are set to arrive in a week's time and the State is ill-equipped to procure and store them though a facility was opened at Munnar.

Certified

According to P.T. Mohandas, president of the Kanthallur Cool Season Vegetable Marketing Farmers Society, an organisation of farmers supplying vegetables to Hortcorp, nearly 70 per cent of the total vegetable production goes to Tamil Nadu.

He said the Kerala Agricultural University had issued them a certificate that cabbage, carrot, potato, beetroot and beans from Kanthallur were free of pesticide residue as "farmers follow traditional method since the land is highly fertile." "However, timely procurement by agencies such as Hortcorp and persuading farmers to sell produce to the Hortcorp are needed if all the produce has to reach directly to the markets in Kerala," He said.

It was only a few years ago that the State intervened to procure vegetables from the two villages and the farmers had been traditionally selling produce to the merchants from Tamil Nadu as the land was close to that State.

He said farmers sell produce at a lower price when there is a flood of items during the peak season and there is no agency to ensure timely procurement. He said there was no demand for butter beans and garlic, a major item under cultivation, in Kerala.

Mr. Mohandas said that if the total area under grandis cultivation in Vattavada and Kanthallur was brought under vegetable cultivation, the entire demand for the cool season vegetables in Kerala could be met.

At present Kanthallur has 711 hectares of land consisting of 1,414 farmers under the society. Over a 1,000 ha. could be brought under vegetable cultivation if the grandis trees were removed, he said.

According to special agriculture officer Shaji Manakkattu, there was an increase in areas of vegetable cultivation in Vattavada and a major portion of the produce goes directly to Tamil Nadu.

The main factor is the traditional link of the farmers with merchants of Tamil Nadu, where there is a big market for vegetables. He said except potato, there was no technological support to store large quantities of other vegetables such as tomato and carrot. When there is a flood of vegetables, the markets in Tamil Nadu are active to receive it in any quantity — a reason why vegetables from Vattavada and Kanthallur either do not reach the Kerala market or arrive after reaching Tamil Nadu.

Krishi abhiyan campaign launched



Kalaburagi Zilla Panchayat President Nitin Guttedar launched a two-day extensive awareness campaign, krishi abhiyan, covering the entire district in Kalaburagi city on Thursday.

During the two-day mobile Krishi Abiyan programme, officials of the agriculture and other departments including the Animal Husbandry, Sericulture, and Fisheries along with agriculture scientists from the University of Agriculture Sciences and Agriculture Colleges would visit different villages and provide all the details of various programmes initiated by the government for increasing the yield and plant protection methods.

Official sources said that during the campaign, opportunity would be given to the farmers to interact with the officials and on-the-spot soil testing would be done.

The agriculture scientists would explain the need for correct seed treatment methods to be adopted before taking up the sowing operation.

The officials would also explain the latest technology available in plant protection and sowing methodology.

The farmers would also be provided the details of the Krishi Bhagya Programme and how to apply to get the benefit of the scheme.

The mobile awareness campaign would be taken up at Hirapur, Udnur, Seethnur, Nandikur, Kotnur, Naganahalli and Kesaratigi on Thursday.

Malnad farmers take to ginger cultivation in a big way



Poor returns from paddy and maize cultivation seem to be pushing farmers to grow ginger in the Malnad region.

While the total area under ginger cultivation was 2,000 acres in 2008, it has now spread to 16,000 acres.

Narendrappa, a farmer from Choradi village, has been cultivating ginger in his three-acre land for the last two years. He said the profit from paddy and maize was less than Rs. 25,000 an acre. With ginger, it was around Rs. 1 lakh with an average yield of 100 quintals and at a modest Rs. 2,000 per quintal, he said.

Earlier, farmers at Ripponpet, Choradi, Esur, and surrounding villages used to rent their land to farmers from Kerala for ginger cultivation. On realising that it was lucrative, they have started cultivating the crop on their own from the past three years.

But not all farmers have profited. Suresh, a marginal farmer from Kalukoppa village, incurred loss as the ginger crop in his two-acre land got infected by fungal wilt last year.

There are also serious environmental concerns about such large-scale ginger cultivation. The soil drenching method is used to control bacterial and fungal wilt and farmers use heavy dose of pesticide in some parts of Malnad region to control the disease.

Owing to excessive use of chemical fertilizer and pesticides for ginger cultivation, the soil turns barren, as shown by scientific studies.

Nagarajappa Adivappar, scientist with Krishi Vignana Kendra of the University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, Shivamogga, told *The Hindu* that soil fertility gets affected with sequential cultivation of ginger for more than two years. A few farmers indiscriminately use chemical inputs to enhance yield.

They have to use chemical inputs judiciously and go for crop rotation, he said.

Experts express serious environmental concerns over large-scale ginger cultivation

Farm festival from today

A farm festival will be organised at Pattanakkad on June 12 to mark the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the UDF government. K.C. Venugopal, MP, will inaugurate the programme at the Block Panchayat Hall. The festival, named 'Vallam Nira', is aimed at giving new impetus to farming, with particular focus on horticulture. Classes will be conducted on organic farming and various agricultural schemes eligible for government aid.

Exotic weeds a threat to ecology



For four years, the Forest Department has been removing the exotic weeds and invasive species proliferating in the forests of The Nilgiris biosphere, but lack of manpower and financial resources is pegging back the effort.

The invasive species such as lantana camera, eupatorium and parthenium hysterophorus affect vegetation in terms of native species and thereby bring down the food base of the herbivores.

Any setback to the herbivore population owing to non-availability of fodder will, in the long run, have a proportionate effect on the carnivore population as well, say forest officials.

The Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, spread over 321 sq km, has a high density of tiger and leopards. The North and South Divisions, covering 1,100 sq km, also have a good population of carnivores.

It has become a common sight to see flocks of sambar deer and spotted deer and even huge mammals like the Indian Gaur and elephants wading through largely grown exotic species, activists say.

According to a senior forest official in the MTR, the park management began removing the invasive species four years ago at the rate of 500 hectares every year and the site was maintained for three years to prevent resurfacing.

As such this requires enormous manpower and a huge financial allocation , he points out.

At this rate, environmentalists say, the clearing of invasive species will take a long time.

“Until then, the effect on native vegetation and the resultant impact on herbivores and carnivores will continue,” says V. Ramsundar, an official involved in the study of the impact of weeds and invasive species.

Use of machinery

Deployment of machines for removing weeds did not go down well with environmentalists and forest managers as earth movers also caused damage to native vegetation. Considering the sensitive ecology and presence of micro bio-diversity, forest managers are averse to the use of machinery.

They are also apprehensive of using chemicals for eradicating invasive species.

K. Kalidasan of Osai says that institutions such as the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University (TNAU) and the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IGTB) could be roped in to study the commercial value of these weeds and species.

Based on the commercial value, agencies could be permitted to remove them in a controlled and regulated atmosphere.

Similarly, there could be research on the use of these weeds as bio-fuel so that the removal of weeds and their exploitation could be entrusted to agencies that could make money and contribute to the wellbeing of forest ecology, he adds.

On the use of herbicide and biological control, there is need to have them studied on model plots in smaller pockets before introducing them to ecologically sensitive forests rich in micro bio-diversity.

“These options need to be tried as manual removal of weeds is not only time consuming but also expensive,” he points out.

Farmers assured of right business environment



Move to ensure fair price to farmers and eliminate middlemen

Promising to play an effective role as a catalyst, officials from the Department of Agricultural Marketing and Agri Business assured to provide a right environment for farmers and merchants to buy and sell their produce.

Listing out a number of features of the department at a meeting here on Thursday, its Director C. Manoharan said that the government’s objective was to ensure fair price to farmers and eliminate middlemen.

Apart from this, the farmers could stock their produce at facilities provided by the Agricultural Marketing Committee in different locations in each district and sell when the prices were good.

Usually, there would be a tendency among traders to bargain hard with farmers during harvest time so as to make big profit. To prevent distress sale by farmers, the government had introduced many user-friendly measures.

Collector L. Subramanian said that the district administration was keen to see a sea change in the lives of farmers and appealed to them to make use of facilities made available by the Agricultural Marketing Committee.

Like how Tiruchengode was famous for cotton market and Erode for turmeric, Madurai should become famous for 'Malli' and paddy so as to attract merchants from many places.

The farmers, who spoke on the occasion, offered many suggestions. The Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) should allow farmers to transport their produce in its buses as it was not allowed by the crew on the pretext that they occupied precious passenger space. The Collector assured to examine the modalities with the officials and the TNSTC.

A progressive farmer Arulprakasam said that a core committee should be formed to work out the nitty-gritty in the functioning of the Agricultural Marketing Committee by involving various stakeholders.

He suggested creating awareness among farmers of the existence of Agricultural Marketing Committee facilities in Madurai, Tirumangalam, Usilampatti and Vadipatti.

Jaggery merchants suggested that if they were given space on the Agricultural Marketing Committee premises, they would vacate their shops functioning in Madurai city.

This would also pave way for eliminating traffic snarls.

Earlier, J. Thavasamuthu, secretary, Madurai Agricultural Marketing Committee, welcomed the gathering.

'Farmers need training about nutrition for plants'

"Providing the right kind of nutrition to plants is as important as irrigation and protection from diseases. Farmers need to be regularly trained in this field," a bio-fertilizer expert said in Bidar on Thursday.

Basavaraj Girenavar, Founder and Chief Scientist at Criyagen, a start-up in the field of bio-fertilizers, spoke to progressive farmers and farm scientists at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

“Most farmers throw around fertilizers in their field thinking that is the best way to provide nutrition to plants. They don’t realize that crops need different types of fertilizers applied to different parts of the plants at different times,” he said.

He said that studies had revealed that across India, soils lack organic carbon, micro-nutrients and microbes. These inputs need to be added to the soils in the right quantity and at the right time, he said. He urged farmers to gradually shift to bio-fertilizers and organic manure as they would increase the count of microbial organisms in the soil that will enrich it and ultimately become a natural breeding ground for plants, without additives.

Dr. Girenavar, an alumnus of Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University, has set-up Criyagen at the incubation centre in the University of Agriculture Sciences, Bengaluru. His company is building a one crore litre capacity bio-fertilizer plant in Bengaluru rural district. “We will soon become a Rs. 100 crore corporation,” he said.

K.M. Mahantesh, project officer of Reliance foundation, said that charity had taken up watershed development, healthcare and education improvement and capacity building for women in around 12 villages in the district.

S.A. Patil, Former Director, Indian Agriculture Research Institute, said several agencies including ICRISAT, were creating a 100-acre model farm in Bidar. “The best practices in farming will be used there. It will serve as an open air teaching centre for farmers and a research and development centre for scientists,” he said.

Vivek Chakote, District Coordinator of the Indian society of agri-professionals, said the farm produce organisations set-up in Bhalki and Basava Kalyan are helping farmers find the right price for their produce.

Ravi Deshmukh, training coordinator, KVK, and others were present. The interaction was organised by the India-Morocco Food legume initiative.

Slump in mango production sours pulp industry in Chittoor

Yield registers a dip of 90 per cent than average this season

Mango pulp business in Chittoor district is in for a jolt, with the fruit production witnessing a drastic dip this year. The production so far has

registered a slump of shocking 90 per cent, even as only a month or so is left for the seasonal business to close.

Chittoor district, among the largest pulp supplier to the global market from India, has mango plantations spreading over 70,000 hectares and five market yards at Damalacheruvu, Chittoor, Bangarupalem, Palamaner and Tirupati being the beehive of activities has been a regular phenomenon.

However, severe drought has taken a toll on the business in the past one decade, despite more farmers traditionally engaged in paddy and sugarcane farming have tried their luck with mango during the period.

In 2012-13, the mango yield in the district was 50 per cent of the average, which plummeted to 35 per cent in the next year. This season, it has hit a historic low of 10 per cent.

“The business this year has faced the worst crisis in the last five decades. For the first time, we have a little or no exports of the sought-after varieties such as Thothapuri and Neelam,” district mango merchants association president N.C. Ramachandra Reddy told *The Hindu*.

Chittoor, sandwiched by Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, reap rich dividends in mango business from the exports of Chandura, Kalepadu, Khadar and Banginapalle varieties. Traders say the varieties have almost disappeared from the markets. Further, the available lots are of poor quality. “Most of the stocks are damaged and farmers are dump them in the market yards. With no takers, the cattle are feasting on the fruits,” they say.

“Apart from the heartbreaking yields, slump in demand also is hitting farmers and pulp traders hard. Mango prices have remained the same for the last three years,” Mr. Reddy points out.

Severe drought has left 20 per cent of the plantations dead, incurring loss of crores to the business. Mango farmers must adopt scientific farming methods now to ensure high yields and prosperity of the industry,” he adds.

Grape farmer tastes sweet success with innovation



The above 80 per cent humidity prevailing in Uppilliyapuram block offers conducive environment for growing grapes.— Photo: M. Srinath.

A farmer of Erakudi in Uppilliyapuram block has adopted an innovative cultivation technique taking due advantage of climatic and soil conditions in the block, in general, and in his fields, in particular.

N. Narendran (44), the farmer, has cultivated ‘panneer’ grapes variety on half an acre of his farm after obtaining the seasoned ratoon from Theni.

“A sustained crop protection technique is needed for cultivating grape,” he says adding that this was his second attempt to raise the crop. In his earlier attempt, although the crop had developed some growth, it suddenly failed leading to financial loss. Undaunted by the failure, he raised the crop with awareness of corrective measures.

Groundnut cake is the most important ingredient for the growth of the grape plants. In the initial phase, all through the first month, the cake, dissolved in water, should be applied. “Later on, the powdered cake should be sprayed all along the fields,” he says explaining the strategy he has adopted.

At the end of the year, the crop is ready for harvest once in three months.

“The crop can be harvested for at least a decade. The period of harvest can be 20 years depending on maintenance of the crop,” he says. The quantum of harvest would vary from quarter to quarter depending on the growth of the fruits.

Encouraged by Mr. Narendran's initiative, the Horticulture Department has extended adequate support to him through subsidy-based scheme for setting up drip irrigation implements, stone pillars and nets for the creeper.

T. Chandrasekaran, Deputy Director of Horticulture, said that Uppilliyapuram block was suitable for raising grapes in the past. Even Mr. Narendran's father was a progressive grape cultivator a few decades ago. The humidity was over and above 80 per cent, an ideal condition for the crop. The soil texture was suitable for raising the crop.

He has appealed to the farmers of Uppilliyapuram, Thuraiyur, Thottiyam and Thathaiyengarpet to raise grapes as all these areas were suitable for the crop. The department would extend its support to the promising farmers, he added.

Aiding their drive up the success ladder

Subsidy schemes help in economic growth of entrepreneurs



Collector M.Ravikumar inspecting a medium scale ornamental fish farm at Sakkamalpuram in Tuticorin district on Thursday. Photo: N. Rajesh

An ornamental fish farm with the aid of government subsidy at Sakkammalpuram has provided a sustainable economic growth for G. Saravanan, an ornamental fish farmer. Through sale of cultured ornamental fishes in this farm, he was racking up a profit of Rs. 2 lakh every year. Demand for such cultured colourful fishes were on the rise in India and

abroad and these were being marketed to buyers from Kolkata, Mumbai, Cochin, Bangalore and Andhra Pradesh also, he said while Collector M. Ravikumar interacted with him after inspecting his farm.

The farm spans across nearly an acre and was established at a cost of Rs. 8 lakh with 25 percent subsidy provided by National Fisheries Development Board during 2012-13. With 79 different colourful species mostly exotic varieties nurtured in fresh water in over hundred concrete aquarium tanks, a stock of 25,000 ornamental fishes was available. Fishes cultured in enclosed concrete tanks had not only yielded desired results for the entrepreneur but had also offered livelihood support for women, mostly from rural areas, the fish farmer said.

Subsequently, the Collector along with the Fisheries Department officials visited a fish seed bank at Maramangalam village in Srivaikuntam taluk. Considering the significance of inland fisheries, three nursery ponds and six fish farm ponds had been serving as the fish seed bank of the area and were in existence since 2012-13 with a subsidy of Rs. 3 lakh, Ponraj, an entrepreneur said. Seeds of 'katla,' 'rogu' and 'mrigal' were being reared into fingerlings and in forty days around 20,000 fingerlings could be got in a single harvest, Mr. Ponraj, who earned success through this venture, informed. Joint Director of Fisheries R. Amal Xavier, Assistant Director of Fisheries (Marine) AP. Isaac Jeyakumar, Assistant Director of Tuticorin Fishing Harbour Management S. Siva Kumar, Inspector of Fisheries T. Vijayaraghavan and others accompanied.

KCBC plea to help paddy, rubber farmers

The Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC), the apex body of the Catholic Church hierarchy in the State, has expressed its solidarity with the paddy and rubber farmers in the wake of the hardships they are facing for various reasons.

The bishops, who met here, also expressed their anxiety about increasing hatred among various communities and promised to build friendship groups. Steps would be taken to avoid competitions between communities. —
Special Correspondent

Traditional fishing begins in Malpe

It is once again that time of the year when one sees traditional boats off the Malpe coast doing fishing. The fishing season for the traditional or country-boat fishermen began after they offered prayers to the sea on Malpe beach here on Thursday.

There are about 2,500 traditional fishermen who do traditional fishing in the Malpe zone, whose jurisdiction ranges from Kaup to Bengre. These fishermen have divided themselves into 43 groups.

But there are other zones, including Hejmady, Padubidri, Kundapur and Gangolli, in the district. These zones have their own groups of traditional fishermen. The mechanised fishing boats do not go for fishing during this season as there is a ban on their activity from June 1 to July 31 (inclusive of both days).

Traditional fishing is tough as it is done in the rain. About 25 fishermen go in a boat to do fishing. They go as early as 6 a.m. and return by 6 p.m. or nightfall, to the shore. “We go into the sea up to six kilometres from land or up to the St. Mary’s Island to catch fish. We go only to an extent from where the shore is visible and it is easy to return,” said Shekar Gurikara, a fisherman.

They use their knowledge of the sea and intuition to catch fish with traditional nets. They spread the net in a round shape and catch fish.

“When a shrimp jumps in the sea, we know that there are shrimps available there and we catch it. In the process, fish too get caught,” said Sadashiva Kanchan, secretary of Malpe Traditional Boat Fishermen’s Association.

“But sometimes we do not get any catch at all. At times, when the sea is rough or there is a sea-storm, we have no alternative but to return to the shore. It is a back-breaking job,” said Shekhar Suvarna, another fisherman.

Some fishermen were sore about the uniform fishing ban of two months announced by the government. Umesh Salian, fisherman, said that due to this uniform ban, traditional fishermen lost 15 days of fishing as they could fish only till July 31. “But we do not have any other alternative. We have to do the best we can during the available period,” he said.

“We hope that the sea god will be kind enough to give enough fish catch to make up for the loss of 15 days of fishing,” added fisherman Dejappa.

Traditional fishermen say that it is tough as the activity is taken up in the rainy season

Nestle moves court against Maggi ban

“The regulators have issued orders without following due process of law”

Amid a raging controversy over Maggi noodles, Nestle India on Thursday moved the Bombay High Court seeking judicial review and revocation of the orders of food safety regulators, which led to a ban on Maggi in Maharashtra.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) passed an order on June 5 terming Maggi noodles “unsafe and hazardous for human consumption.”

Following this, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Maharashtra passed an order on June 6 banning Maggi after some samples were found to contain lead above the permissible limit.

Appealing that the orders be quashed and set aside, the petition filed by Nestle India said, “The impugned orders have been passed by respondents [regulators] without authority and without following the due process of law. The orders are illegal, arbitrary and violative of the principles of natural justice.”

A Division Bench of Justices V.M. Kanade and B.P. Colabawalla will hear the petition on Friday.

The company alleged that the orders did not comply with the mandatory provisions of Section 34 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, which required the Designated Officer to first apply to the Commissioner of Food Safety to impose a prohibition order.

Further, the authorities had not conducted a detailed risk analysis before declaring the products unsafe. “Mere conduct of tests is not sufficient to come to a conclusion that a health risk exists,” the company said.

Contesting the presence of MSG (monosodium glutamate) and lead in excess, the petition said such a conclusion was “misleading.” Nestle India “did not add any MSG in the process of production. MSG, if any, found in the final product or the Tastemaker are purely on account of MSG being found naturally in some of the ingredients used in the Tastemaker,” the petition said.

Water tanks installed

As part of its CSR initiatives, the Salem Steel Plant handed over stainless steel water tanks to Poolampatty town panchayat near here on Tuesday.

The stainless steel water tanks, each with a capacity of 1,500 litres, were fabricated at a cost of Rs. 1.85 lakh.

P. K. Mishra, General Manager in-charge-Works, Salem Steel Plant, commissioned the water tanks.

Remote sensing centre gets new campus

The State is the first in the country to embark on an ambitious Karnataka Geographical Information System (K-GIS) initiative that will catalyse seamless planning across departments, S.R. Patil, Minister for Information Technology, Biotechnology, and Science and Technology, said here on Thursday.

Mr. Patil earlier inaugurated the new campus of the Karnataka State Remote Sensing Applications Centre (KSRSAC) at Doddabettahalli, near Yelahanka, and also the K-GIS prototype portal. The Cabinet recently sanctioned Rs. 150 crore to implement it.

The State centre has provided images from remote sensing satellites and GIS data for over 100 development programmes in the State.

The K-GIS, when in place, will enable public to access details of government works. The portal provides 54 parameters.

Workshop on bird conservation

The Centre for Wildlife Studies, College of Forestry, KAU, is organising a two-day workshop on bird conservation from June 13. The event is being

organised in collaboration with the BirdLife International, UK, Bombay Natural History Society and the State Forest Department.

The Indian EXPRESS

‘Knee-jerk’ import of pulses not advisable, say market experts

The current landed price of imported Australian chana works out to Rs 4,700 per quintal, which is way above the minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 3,175 payable to farmers in India



Even as the Centre has announced plans for large-scale imports of pulses to control runaway inflation, there are many advocating caution with regard to any hurried floating of tenders that, they say, will only lead to further flare up in international prices.

Between March 31 and now, landed prices of Burmese ‘Lemon’ tur/arhar (pigeon pea) at Indian ports have risen from \$935 to \$1,160 per tonne, while going up from \$935 to \$1,260 for fair average quality urad (black gram) of the same origin. There has been a similar firming up in landed (cost & freight) prices of Australian chana (chickpeas) from \$640 to \$780 a tonne.

“The government shouldn’t go in for imports now when there is a dearth of supply in the global markets. The new peas and lentil (masur) crops from Canada/US will arrive only in August-September, while it is October-November for Australian chickpea and December-January in the case of

Burmese tur and urad,” said Pravin Dongre, chairman, Indian Pulses and Grains Association.

According to him, floating of tenders now will only lead to global prices — which have already hardened because of India’s production falling to 17.38 million tonnes (mt) in 2014-15, from the previous year’s 19.25 mt — going up further. “The government should wait till August before going ahead with imports,” he added.

Tejinder Narang, a grains trade analyst, felt that the government has erred in announcing its intention to import, “which will only encourage multinational traders to take bullish positions”. Any move to undertake imports has to be done silently, which is not the case whenever tenders are floated by state trading agencies such as MMTC and STC. The problem is even more in pulses, where the estimated annual global trade of hardly 15 million tonnes is less than India’s production.

Besides, there are political implications as well. The current landed price of imported Australian chana works out to Rs 4,700 per quintal, which is way above the minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 3,175 payable to farmers in India. The same goes for tur (Rs 7,400 per quintal for imported Burmese Lemon versus MSP of Rs 4,350) and urad (Rs 8,100 versus MSP of Rs 4,350).

“If the government does not increase pulses MSPs significantly this time and imports at high global prices, it is bound to attract criticism of favouring Australian or Canadian farmers at the expense of Indian growers,” a market expert pointed out.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

[Haryana aims for 10,000 hectares under oilseeds this kharif](#)

Haryana agriculture department has set a target to bring an area of more than 10,000 hectares in the state for cultivation of oilseed crops like groundnut and castor during the ensuing kharif season. While giving the details, state agriculture minister O P Dhankar said that out of it, 3,000 hectares would be

brought under oilseeds in Sirsa district and 1,200 hectares in Bhiwani.

Oilseed crops would be sown over an 900 hectares each in Fatehabad and Gurgaon, 800 hectares in Hisar, 600 hectares in Rewari, 400 hectares each in districts of Faridabad, Mewat, Mahendergarh and Jind, 300 hectares each in Yamunanagar and Kaithal and 100 hectares each in districts of Jhajjar, Sonipat, Karnal and Ambala.

HT power line project stayed on farmers' plea

A key component of the Rs 2,300-crore super high-tension transmission line being laid through agricultural villages in Kancheepuram district suffered a setback with the Madras high court on Thursday ordering maintenance of status quo.

Justice M Sathyanarayanan granted the interim order against implementation of the project till July 14, making it clear that excavation of earth and erection of poles on the lands "in respect of the petitioner-farmers alone" would be on hold.

The matter relates to a petition filed by a group of farmers who said state utility Tantransco was attempting to erect transmission towers without obtaining the land owners' consent. Calling it invalid, they said the state agency had stripped the farmers of their basic right to livelihood.

The project was to lay a 400kv transmission line for 748km. It involved erection of 2,058 towers at a cost of Rs 2,300 crore. The case involves 24km Vembedu-Kayar section in Kancheepuram district.

Farmers said their primary objection was that people in the locality and village panchayats of Kayar and Vembedu were not made aware of the project. It involved digging of 40ft X 34ft pits to a depth of 20mts to erect foundational pillars. The pillars and towering structures would adversely affect water sources and water currents, they said, adding, "There was no notice given to farmers whose lands were being encroached upon for laying the foundational pillars for the tower base."

While in areas like Nellikuppam the project was taken mostly through government lands, in Kayar and Vembedu it ran right across villages with thick vegetation and agricultural crops, they said. Since there is an alternative route through poromboke and government lands near these villages, the project could be done there without affecting the patta lands in these villages, they said. "A bee line survey indicates that a distance of just 18km more would be required for the alternative route, and it would cost Rs 8 crore additional cost. But, such a diversion would spare acres of cultivable land."

The power transmission is not meant for Tangedco and Tantransco alone, they said, adding that it would service the transmission line requirements of many software companies.

Despite panchayat resolutions and representations, the authorities did not pay any heed to farmers' objections, the petition said. It asked the court to appoint an advocate commissioner and take the assistance of an expert in power transmission to inspect the proposed route and the alternative route suggested by the farmers, and to submit a feasibility and comparative report.

City colleges in Dubai science meet

Jagdambha College of Engineering and Technology (JCET) in Yavatmal in collaboration with Vishwashanti Multipurpose Society is organizing an international conference on science and technology on November 21 on the offshore campus (Ras-Al-KHaimah) of Birla Institute of Technology (BIT) in Dubai.

Speaking to reporters Shittal Waitale, JCET principal said his college along with a few organizations and colleges from Nagpur were together organizing a one-day conference on science and technology in Dubai. The conference would have a participation of over 500 scientists and technologists from across the world.

The speakers include Ishaaque Jaffarani, chemistry department, Umm-Al-Qura University, UAE, Jacob George, Canada, MH Abbaspour Fard Mashhad, Iran, Isabella Grishkan, Israel, Sizenado Silveria, Brazil, Imda Burgio, Pakistan.

Sudhakar Shinde from BIT said the conference would be a big feast for the scientists and engineers as it was going to cover almost all branches and aspects of the two fields like biosciences, agriculture, climate change and environment, resource management, food science and nutrition, computer science and engineering, most branches of engineering including aeronautical engineering, thermal engineering, food, paper and pulp technology and science, engineering and management subjects.

The other collaborators from Nagpur include Sevadal Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Shivaji Science College, Mohta Science College, Aakar Bahuddeshiya Sanstha, Arun Motghare College, Kondha - Kosara, Bhandara, PDPV College Tasgaon, LBS College, Satara, Aakar Bahudeshiya Sanstha. The principals and heads of these institutions and organizations present during the press conference included Sanjay Charlawar, Pravin Charde, Arun Motghare, Pavan Watile, DK Burghate, KJ Cherian, Sachin Borigawar etc.

[Tamil Nadu to impose curbs on sale of pesticides to farmers](#)

Reacting to Kerala raising concerns about excessive use of pesticides on vegetable farms in Tamil Nadu, the state agricultural department has decided to impose restrictions on sale of pesticides in private outlets.

Farmers, hereafter, will have to produce prescriptions from local horticultural or agricultural officers to purchase pesticides from shops. A formal order in this regard is expected anytime. Concerned over farmers throwing safety parameters to the wind in their eagerness to save crops, the department has launched a massive exercise to ensure that the field level officers keep a close watch on farming activities in their jurisdiction and also advise farmers on right practices.

"Though majority of farmers consult our field officers, insistence on prescriptions to purchase pesticides will heighten the accountability, both that of our officials and farmers," said a senior official. Indiscriminate use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers has catastrophic effect on land, quality of produce and health of farmers, labourers, traders and consumers, he said.

The department has also decided to insist that private pesticide retail outlets and government-run agricultural extension centres display list of banned pesticides to educate farmers.

These steps have been taken to avoid further embarrassment for the government as a team of officials from Kerala's food safety department had inspected vegetable farms in nine districts in Tamil Nadu in May and prepared a report saying many farmers were using pesticides, at times expired ones, three to five times more than the permissible limit.

Since Tamil Nadu is a major supplier of vegetables to Kerala, the neighbouring government has imposed curbs on movement of the commodity. It also shot off a letter to Tamil Nadu raising concerns over farmers' unsafe agricultural practices.

While admitting indiscriminate use of pesticide on TN farms, Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association general secretary S Ranganathan said, "The government's decision to introduce prescriptions for farmers is a welcome move. Such a monitoring mechanism will allay Kerala's fears. Irresponsible application of pesticides based on the advice of local pesticide traders should not be encouraged."

[Apples orchards replace tea gardens in lower Himachal](#)

Apple is brewing a storm in Kangra's tea cup. Traditionally known for its tea gardens, Kangra region in Himachal Pradesh is witnessing a slow invasion of apple trees in the tea plantations.

The reason is Kangra's tea industry is struggling to compete with Sikkim and Assam varieties in the market and farmers are now banking on apple to turn their fortunes. And they are pinning their hopes on the low-chilling variety as the district doesn't get enough snowfall required for common varieties.

While area under apple plantation is slowly on the rise in Kangra, experts said it would take another 2-3 years to know whether the lower area of Dhauladhar ranges can actually go for commercial cultivation.

To realize the dreams of cultivating apple in the lower hills, farmers are relying on the low-chilling variety provided by the horticulture department and those prepared in private laboratories through tissue culture. According to some estimates, around 150 farmers have already planted apple in their fields on trial basis, most of them in Palampur, Nurpur, Kandbhari, Saperu, Lambagaon and Dharamshala. In the wake of the new interest, the horticulture department had imported low-chilling varieties of 'Anna' and

'Dorsett Golden' from France and distributed them among farmers of Kangra region where, till a few years ago, no one had ever imagined of having apple orchards, sources said.

In Dharamshala, Maan Tea Estate near Dari has planted around 1,000 saplings; C K Mahajan a retired judge has planted around 40-50 in Nurpur; in Palampur around 200 have been planted on a trial basis. Last winter, 100 saplings were planted in Lambagaon and 200 in Kandbari and Saperu areas of Dharamshala.

Devinder Pathania, general manager of Maan Tea Estate, said that they got into apple plantation around 4-5 years ago. "In 2013, our orchard had produced around 500 kg apple, but production decreased due to improper pruning after that. We did pruning last year and are expecting a good crop next year. People from the area have now started taking plants from us as they too want to grow apple," he added.

Deputy director horticulture, Dr Dhyan Singh Rana, said that in the high hills, chilling hours of 700 to 1600 hours are required for good production. He said that had the traditional varieties those grown in high hills been provided to farmers of lower hills, chilling hours would not have been completed. "To overcome this problem, low-chilling varieties from France were imported in 2011-12. These require only 300 to 700 chilling hours," he added.

He said that imported plants are now bearing good, but would take another 2-3 years to establish whether commercial cultivation of apple is possible in the lower areas. He said that commercial production depends on the success rate of plant and their ability to fight diseases.

Rana said that, at present, farmers in the lower hills do not know about pruning of apple plants and how to spray them. "They need to be educated to ensure good crop," he added.

According to experts, low-chilling varieties would have a shorter shelf life. However, their biggest advantage would be early arrival in market, especially in the months of June and July, which would fetch farmers a good price.

First experiment

While the scientists are yet to verify the success of imported low-chilling varieties, lower hills have started witnessing mushrooming of apple orchards by procuring apple plants from the nursery of Hariman Sharma from Paniala village in Bilaspur district. In the year 1999, Sharma had noticed a fruit bearing apple seedling in his courtyard. This plant had probably germinated from some seed thrown outside. Hariman could sense this little apple tree bearing fruits at a warm place like Paniala was not an ordinary plant, so he preserved it. Next year, he took some branches from this tree and grafted them on plum tree as no apple tree was available. The grafting was successful and, two years later, they started bearing good fruits.

After bringing some crab apple seedlings from Shimla, he continued his experiment and created an apple orchard at the village. With all the apple trees bearing fruit, possibility of commercial apple orcharding at very low hills with a warm climate was confirmed.

"In the lower districts of the state, including Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Una, Kangra, Chamba and Solan, people have developed apple orchards after taking plants from my nursery. I am happy that my idea has turned into a source of livelihood for others," said Sharma.

BusinessLine

THE HINDU

Cotton prices likely to remain stable

The Indian Cotton Federation (ICF) does not foresee big fluctuations in cotton prices this season.

Comfortable stock position, poor export demand, limited buying by domestic mills have helped keep prices under control, say federation officials.

ICF Vice-President K N Viswanathan said that cotton arrivals have been normal at 345 lakh bales.

Lean demand

“While the stocks at this time of the year usually lie with the traders and mills, this year, due to lean buying by the mill sector, huge volumes have been purchased by the Cotton Corporation of India. The quality is good and [is] not as feared by a section of the trade,” he said.

The Corporation has also been releasing the cotton at regular intervals to meet mill demand, he said and added that global demand has been slow and restricted to far eastern countries such as Bangladesh and Vietnam.

China has been a non-importer for some time and the demand from the domestic mills limited to their sale of yarn and fabrics.

In such a situation, volatility in prices won't happen, Viswanathan said.

The farmers, he said, are happy with the minimum support prices this year and will, therefore, keep the area under cotton at the same level the next season.

Mills' woes

But what the textile sector seeks at this juncture is support to hold sufficient volumes at an affordable interest rate of 7 per cent, Viswanathan said.

He pointed out that mills usually carry 3 to 8 months stock as per spinning pattern, and location from the source to maintain uninterrupted production.

Due to sluggish demand for yarn and garments, the mills would need to augment their financial limits to hold cotton as also restrict the interest burden, he said, adding “and so should this burden be limited for cotton growers, traders and government agencies to boost industry and trade.”

Cyclone Ashobaa stalls advance of South-West monsoon

The South-West monsoon made no advance on Thursday, the IMD said, as cyclone Ashobaa appears to have stalled its progress.

The northern limit of the monsoon continues to pass through Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, Bellary in Karnataka, Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh, Chennai, Dhubri in Assam, and Gangtok in Sikkim.

According to IMD officials, the current has stalled as cyclone Ashobaa is likely to have sucked out moisture from the system.

No moisture

The current is likely to strengthen once the cyclone moves away and peters out.

On Wednesday, the current had covered south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and southwest Bay of Bengal.

It had also covered some parts of north interior Karnataka and Rayalaseema.

The South-West monsoon hit Kerala on Friday, four days behind the normal onset date of June 1.

Reservoir levels

Last week, the IMD lowered its forecast for June-September monsoon rains to 88 per cent of the long-period average from 93 per cent forecast in April. Water level in the main reservoirs of the country stood at 40.139 billion cubic metres as of June 11, accounting for 26 per cent of the total capacity of 157.799 billion cubic metres, according to the latest update from the Central Water Commission.

The current level is normal on year, and 39 per cent higher than the last 10 years' average.

About two-thirds of India's total arable land depends on June-September rains for irrigation.

The water level in reservoirs is also replenished during the four-month monsoon season.

The South-West monsoon had hit the Kerala coast four days behind the normal onset date of June 1.

The country received normal rains at 36.4 mm during June 1-10.

Natural gas rally may extend

The outlook for natural gas futures traded on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) is bullish. The contract has surged about 10 per cent in the past week and currently trades near Rs.185 per mmBtu. The 21-day moving average at Rs. 180 is the immediate support for the contract. The rally can extend further to test Rs. 200 in the coming days.

Traders can go long. Stop-loss can be kept at Rs. 178 for the target of Rs. 197. Intermediate declines to Rs. 180 can be used to accumulate long positions.

The outlook will turn negative only if the contract records a decisive close below Rs. 180. Such a break can drag it lower to Rs. 173 thereafter.

MCX crude oil

MCX crude oil futures are trading within Rs. 3,600 and Rs. 4,000 a barrel sideways range. The contract has risen towards the upper end of this range in the past week. It has come off slightly after recording a high of Rs. 3,955 on Wednesday. The contract is currently trading near Rs. 3,885. Traders can wait for a breakout of this sideways range to get a clear idea on the next direction of move.

Immediate resistance for the contract is at Rs. 3,968 – the 200-day moving average. A strong break above this level will increase the bullish momentum for the contract to breach above the psychological level of Rs. 4,000. Such a break can then take the contract higher to the next target of Rs. 4,450. On the other hand, inability to break above Rs. 3,968 and a reversal from current levels will keep the contract inside its sideways range for some time. In such a scenario, the contract can fall to Rs. 3,700 and Rs. 3,600.

Business Standard

Onion price moves up on reduced supply, rising demand

Nafed, SFAC also begin to build buffer stocks under govt's Price Stabilisation Fund, for release in the market if price flares later



[Onion](#) prices have begun rising again in wholesale markets on reduced supply, as large farmers and stockists release in controlled quantities, expecting a further price rise during the lean season of August and September.

During this two-month period, [onion prices](#) have surged in the past, to a lifetime high of Rs 100 a kg in the retail market in October 2013. While experts do not expect a repetition, they believe the price would remain elevated.

Data from the Union [agriculture](#) ministry showed an onion price rise of 13 per cent last week, before softening to settle at Rs 1,550 a quintal in the benchmark Lasalgaon market on Thursday; it was quoted at Rs 1,100 a qtl there in May. In Mumbai, the price was Rs 2,300 a qtl on Thursday, a rise of 21 per cent from Rs 1,900 a qtl on June 1.

“Onion prices move slightly up during June as stockists supply stored quantity from warehouses. This year, however, the price is elevated because of report of crop damage on unseasonal rain in February–March. But, the price is unlikely to rise abnormally this year, due to commencement of new season sowing,” said R P Gupta, Director, National [Horticulture](#) Research & Development Foundation.

With intermittent rain has begun, so has nursery sowing of seed. Onion sowing does not require too much of rain.

Another reason for the recent price increase is the mandate, for the first time, given by the Union ministry of finance to the Small Farmers Agriculture Consortium (SFAC) and National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing

Federation of India Ltd (Nafed) to build a buffer stock. Under the Price Stabilisation Fund announced in the earlier Union Budget, both are to procure onions from the open market.

“We have procured 2,200 tonnes so far from markets in Nashik and Indore districts, with a target to procure this year at 10,000 tonnes. The procurement is done in mandis through the price discovery mechanism in absence of a minimum support price,” said Pravesh Sharma, managing director, SFAC. It is storing onion in hired godowns.

Nafed is concentrating on Nashik district for procurement of onion, from the Lasalgaon and Pimpalgaon markets. “We have procured 1,700 tonnes so far. Our target is 2,500 tonnes this year for Delhi-centric release, as per direction from the Delhi government. We have our own storage facility,” said S K Verma, general manager, Nafed.

Apart from domestic stock building, rising export orders and falling arrivals have also helped the price to rise. In Lasalgaon, for example, daily arrival has fallen to 1,400 tonnes now from a little over 1,600 tonnes earlier. During the peak harvesting season, arrivals hit 2,282 tonnes on May 19.

The National Horticulture Board estimates output at 19.4 million tonnes in 2014-15, similar to last year. However, traders estimate crop damage of 15-20 per cent due to unseasonal rain early this year.

“Farmers anticipated onion price to go up due to crop damage. Therefore, they are releasing in controlled quantity,” said Atul Shah, director at the Pimpalgaon wholesale market.